

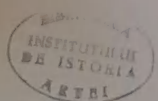
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THE
HOLY AND GREAT
MONASTERY
OF VATOPAIDI
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The luxury in which the ruling class of Byzantium lived and with which they decorated their churches and houses is known to us both from written sources and from the very few examples which have survived. The accounts of Western travellers who visited Constantinople between the 10th and the 14th century show wonder and admiration at the wealth of the City¹. These descriptions deal chiefly with small-scale works of art and particularly with works of goldsmithing and metalwork on which gold and silver were used in abundance². These materials were used for the production of plates, drinking cups and dishes, candlesticks and candelabra, perfume phials and incense-burners, revetments of icons and covers for books, even icons themselves and sarcophagi for Emperors. All these items were frequently decorated with precious or semi-precious stones, pearls, and enamels. Unfortunately, of these works very few have survived. Most fell victim to destruction and looting - particularly by the Crusaders who in 1204 took Constantinople. The few religious objects which were saved are kept in churches of the West, to which they were taken as a result of a sense of piety on the part of some of the nobles among the Crusaders³, and in the monasteries of Mount Athos which managed to keep hold of a part of their former wealth.

This wealth of the monasteries of the Holy Mountain is derived from gifts from the Emperors and the ruling class of Byzantium, presented as tokens of devotion. The Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi possesses exceptional examples from the rich offerings made to it at various times. According to tradition⁴, all the movable valuables of the Monastery were stolen by pirates in the 13th cen-

Fig. 391 (previous page). Kivotidion-reliquary of St Demetrius (11.7 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm.). Second half of the 12th century. Decoration of the base: the Saint defends Thessaloniki.

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tury together with the official documents which it had collected up to that point - apart from two objects, obviously accorded particular religious value, which fortunately survived other looting in later times. These are the famous icon of Our Lady Vematarissa and the equally renowned silver enkolpion (pectoral ornament) of St Demetrius, which contains blood of the saint and blooded-soaked earth, and dates from the 12th century⁵. If these objects really have come down from the period before the looting of the Monastery and were not bought or donated later, as is the case with other objects older than the 13th century⁶, they must be linked with the earliest centuries after its foundation (10th century).

The provenance of these priceless gifts is for the most part unknown. Tradition and the dedicatory inscriptions which belong with some works of the 14th and 15th centuries attribute many of these to members of the imperial family. These include the Despot of Mystras Manuel Cantacuzenus Palaeologus (1330-1380), son of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (1347-1354), Thomas Comnenus Prelumbus, Despot at Ioannina (1348/9-1355/6), the Despot of Thessaloniki Andronicus Palaeologus (1408-1423), third son of Manuel II Palaeologus, and Anna Cantacuzena Palaeologina, wife of Manuel III, Emperor of Trebizond (1390-1412), rulers established in regional centres such as Serres, but also in major centres such as Thessaloniki, Ioannina, and Mystras.

These precious works have been produced with a refined art, striking beauty of design and painstaking workmanship from the technical point of view and are attractive not only because of the value of the materials used, but chiefly because of their artistic quality.

Eikonidia and Enkolpia

Among the treasures in the safekeeping of the

Vatopaidi Monastery, pride of place goes to the *eikonidia* (small icons) in steatite and the *enkolpia* (pectoral pendants) made of semi-precious stones and precious metals. Steatite, the *ἀγίαστος λίθος* (undefiled stone) of the Byzantines⁷, is a material which is easy to work in and can be found in abundance in the Mediterranean region. It is usually light green in colour, but could be painted over in other colours and gilded, the merest traces of which have survived. This stone began to be used from the 10th century onwards for the carving of small icons, because of the ease with which it could be worked on, which makes possible the rendering of details of the subject in much the same way as on ivory, that is, with delicacy and precision. In aesthetic terms, carvings in steatite are very close to ivory reliefs, and together "they occupied the position which sculpture had lost in Byzantium"⁸. The craftsmen who carved ivory, steatite and semi-precious stones used the same sources of inspiration in the iconography and show the same aptitude in their approach to the artistic trends of their times. Carved steatites were used chiefly for the making of *eikonidia* and triptychs, while cameos, semi-precious stones with relief decoration, served mainly as *enkolpia* for private individuals. The introduction of steatite into the organised production of icons in Byzantium must have taken place in the capital, where for at least three centuries, from the 10th to the 12th, there was a centre of production. The multiplicity of forms taken by the technique of the carving and the iconography in the 13th and 14th centuries suggests that in all probability other centres of production had grown up. It is believed that these centres were capable of only limited production and for this reason their craftsmen also carved objects intended for private use from other materials. This is confirmed by finds from archaeological excavation⁹, which come from private houses. Moreover, many of the *eikonidia* and *enkolpia* which were kept in monasteries, such as that of Vatopaidi, were gifts from private individuals, some of whom were connected with the imperial family, as we have already pointed out. Thus the view that these objects of a religious character were



Fig. 392. Eikonidium of St George (21 x 13.5 cm.). The Saint, at full length, in military attire and armed, is rendered in relief. The silver revetment of the frame belongs to the 14th century with additions of a later date.

11th century (icon), 14th century (frame). Steatite and silver.

produced for private individuals - members of the upper social strata - receives confirmation. Such gifts - what are today called *'tamata'*, votive offerings made in fulfilment of a vow - demonstrate the great value which was attached in the Middle Ages, down to the 15th century, to these works of miniature art, which were usually framed with precious materials.

The Monastery of Vatopaidi possesses four steatite *eikonidia* of the Byzantine period.

The oldest of these is the *eikonidium* of St

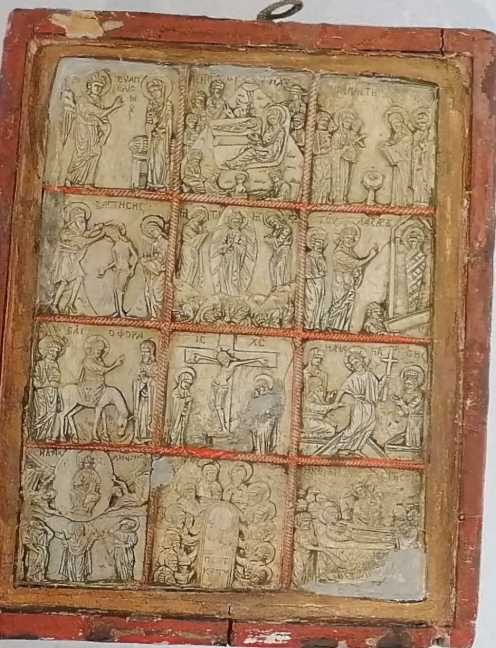


Fig. 393. Eikonidion with scenes from the Dodekaorton in three rows, in low relief (23 x 15 cm.). 14th century. Steatite.

George (Fig. 392), executed mainly in low relief on a small tablet of green steatite. It has an additional feature of interest in the shape of the silver revetment on its wooden frame.

The good condition of the surface of the icon and the relief, in spite of the fact that steatite is easily worn down¹⁰, means that the iconographic subject stands out in all its detail. The Saint, at full length, full-face, wears the attire of a soldier, rendered in accurate detail, the purpose being to depict a warrior-victor who defends the Faith -

and the owner of the icon¹¹. The portrayal of the features of the face is very close to that of two other steatite *eikonidia* of the 11th century¹² which are kept in the Vatican and the Kherson Museums, respectively.

This *eikonidion*, which on the evidence of iconographic and stylistic features is to be dated to the 11th century¹³, was acquired by the Monastery of Vatopaidi in the 14th century, according to tradition as a gift from members of the family of the Emperor John Cantacuzenus (1347-1354)¹⁴, who lived at Ioannina. The fact that this icon of St George today has a wooden frame with a silver revetment of at least two different periods, of which the initial one is the 14th century, lends support to this tradition. The initial cladding survives only on the frame of the upper part, and seems to have been made specially for the *eikonidion*. It includes two circular medallions in high relief with enamel containing the name of the Saint in monogram form. In an effort to repair the silver revetment, two more plates have been added. The one on the lower edge of the icon has plant decoration, and the second, on the upper right edge, with a depiction of a full-length figure, has an inscription which reads "ΙΩ(άννης) Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ" (John the Theologian), and dates from the 12th-13th century. Both these metal plates must have come from the revetments of other icons, probably also in steatite¹⁵.

The *eikonidion* of the Twelve Great Feasts (Fig. 393) of steatite is also said by tradition¹⁶ to have been a gift to the Monastery from relatives of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (1347-1354) from Ioannina, in the 14th century. The surface of the icon is divided into 12 compartments, the divisions between which are marked by a twisted rope band in high relief. The compartments are arranged in four lines, three in each line, and the scenes which they contain follow the established chronological order. The composition in each compartment retains the principal figures only, because of shortage of space, while in an attempt to differentiate between levels and to create depth, the scale of the figures is varied; in most cases the result cannot be described as successful¹⁷. Nor does the iconographic simpli-



Figs 394 and 395. Double-sided processional icon (40 x 33 cm.) with an *eikonidion* in the middle (6 x 5.5 cm.). Front: The Blessed Virgin in the type of the Hodegetria in the middle and the Twelve Apostles in bust on the frame. Back: Six mounted warriors saints in the middle and the Ten Saints of Crete in bust on the frame. 14th century (icon), 16th-17th century (frame). Steatite (icon) and wood (frame).

fication follow the same rules in all the scenes¹⁸, which reveals that the choice was the result of the thinking of the craftsman himself and not influenced by or a copy of a specific model. The Dodekaorton* is a popular subject in *eikonidia* of steatite or jasper and the craftsmen's models numerous, usually drawn from paintings. Three other *eikonidia* kept in the sacristy of the Vatopaidi Monastery with scenes from the Dodekaorton confirm the truth of this.

The relief, rather low for the 14th century, the period to which the *eikonidion* is to be dated¹⁹, permits a limited plasticity in the rendering of the

bodies and of the arrangement of the folds of the garments. It is interesting to note the care with which the heads of the principal, chiefly divine, personages have been portrayed²⁰, in contrast with the secondary characters, who sometimes are not even shown in full²¹.

The small double-sided icon in steatite (Figs 394, 395) which comes next is in the middle of a larger wooden icon-frame. It is an interesting example of a processional icon²², because it combines two techniques of decoration and two materials²³. This steatite icon, which dates from the 14th century, is believed by tradition to have been

a gift of relatives of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (1347-1354) from Serres²⁴ to the Monastery of Vatopaidi. Some two centuries later the icon acquired the frame which it has today, which turned it into a processional icon²⁵. In terms of subject-matter, however, the later painting has been brought into line with the older relief in an effort to create a unified subject on either side²⁶. Thus on the front the *eikonidion* has a depiction of Our Lady Hodeghetria - according to a relief inscription²⁷ above the left shoulder of the Blessed Virgin - flanked by busts of two angels doing reverence in the upper corners. On the wooden part of the icon depictions of the Twelve Apostles²⁸, half-length, frame it. In the centre of the high-relief edge there is a bust of Christ in a hemisphere, which is borne by angelic powers of whom only the wings can be seen. These are probably six-winged cherubim, four of whom are shown in the four corners of the frame of the icon

Fig. 396. Triptych, with double-sided central panel, with the subject of the Great Deisis with fifteen saints in bust on both sides of the central panel. The side panels have depictions of the Apostles Peter and Paul at full length (on the inside) and a floriated cross (on the outside). 13th-14th century. Steatite (central panel) and gilded silver (side panels).



which is not in relief. The combination of all these iconographic features could be seen as a free and summary rendering of the Ascension²⁹.

The subject of the Hodeghetria occurs frequently on steatite *eikonidia* and *enkolpia* of the 12th century. Very close in iconographic terms is the Hodeghetria of the Panaghiarion of the Monastery of St Panteleimon on the Holy Mountain (14th century), which was also, according to a surviving inscription, a gift of a member of the imperial family, and the Hodeghetria on the *eikonidion* in the Victoria and Albert Museum³⁰.

The subject of six mounted soldier saints on horseback with which the reverse side of the *eikonidion* is decorated is not customary on steatite. These saints, in two rows of three, are moving to the right. The fineness of the workmanship of the carving makes it possible for us to distinguish Sts George, Demetrius, and Theodore the Tiro (upper row) and Sts Theodore Strate-



Figs 397 and 398. The other sides of the triptych of Fig. 396.

lates, Procopius, and Nestor³¹ (lower row). They are mounted on heavy horses, dressed in military attire and hold swords or javelins. The lower row of riders is topped by a frame in the shape of arches. The subject on the wooden icon which surrounds this side of the *eikonidion* is, according to an inscription "ΟΙ ΑΓ(Ι)ΟΙ ΔΕΚΑ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΕΣ / ΟΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ / ΚΡΥΤΗ (The Ten Holy Martyrs in Crete)", who are shown in bust form³².

Another steatite double-sided *eikonidion* (Fig. 396), similar to the one just described and decorated in low relief, has been converted into a triptych by the addition of metal side panels. The principal subject of this *eikonidion* is the Deisis³³, and it includes busts of saints arranged, full-face, on both sides below arched apertures, in successive rows with three in each row.

In the first row on the front of the *eikonidion* Christ is shown in the type of the Pantocrator, flanked by the Blessed Virgin and St John the Baptist in the established stances of the Deisis. He is followed by two rows of warrior saints, most of whom can be identified by inscriptions

engraved in capitals which appear between the arches. They are (from the left) Sts Demetrius, George, and an unidentified saint in the first row, and the two Theodores and St Nestor (?) in the second. The saints shown on the reverse (Fig. 398) are mostly hierarchs, but the poor state of the engraved inscriptions which accompany them does not permit the identification of all of them³⁴. This rendering of the Deisis on an *eikonidion* was regarded as "an extensive and visually organised view of how the person at prayer approaches the hierarchy of Paradise"³⁵.

The subject of the Deisis accompanied by hierarchs and physician and warrior saints is also encountered on a steatite *eikonidion* of the 12th century in the Hermitage³⁶, on which, however, the number of saints is smaller and they are shown at full length.

In spite of the iconographic affinity of the Vatopaidi *eikonidion* with works of the 12th century, it is our belief that, on the basis of stylistic features, it can be dated to the 13th century.

The metal addition which has turned the



Figs 399 and 400. Eikonidion-enkolpion (3.8 x 2 cm.), double-sided with a jewelled frame (4.8 x 4 cm.). On the front, an archangel, full-length in military attire, is shown. On the back, two hierarchs in bust form in medallions are depicted. 14th century (eikonidion), 16th century (frame). Jasper and gilded silver.

eikonidion into a triptych is in all probability of a later date, but is still on the turn of the 13th century, as far as the style of the rendering, with the use of incised technique, of the figures of the two first Apostles permits us to hypothesise. In iconographic and stylistic terms, they are very close to the depictions of these two figures on silver covers of three sacred books from Dalmatia, works produced by goldsmiths in Trogir and Split, with clear Byzantine influences, which are dated to the 13th century³⁷ and illustrate the strong influence of Byzantine goldsmithing on the flourishing goldsmithing of Dalmatia.

Also of the 13th century is a steatite *eikonidion* from Thessaloniki showing the Apostles Peter and Paul which has points of similarity both of iconography and style with the figures of the Apostles on the triptych³⁸.

Finally, the foliated cross of the Resurrection which is formed on their outer surface when the leaves of the triptych are closed shows icono-

graphic similarities with metalwork of the 12th century, such as is to be seen in the decoration of reliquaries³⁹.

Included among the votive offerings to the Monastery are *enkolpia*, which from the 4th century the faithful, mainly women and children, wore hanging at the breast as amulets to ward off evil. *Enkolpia* were, however, also made in the form of medallions, *eikonidia*, double or single-sided, and casket-reliquaries. Gold, silver, bronze, stone (steatite, jasper, etc.), and ivory were the materials from which they were made. *Enkolpia* made from stone also had a long and varied tradition among the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the Byzantine period less importance was attached to them, and the themes of their decoration, which in the Early Christian period were also secular, after the Iconoclastic Controversy became exclusively religious. Jasper, a semi-precious stone in the category of the chalcedonies, of

a deep green colour with markings of red or other colours, was particularly popular with the Byzantines⁴⁰, who used it to make *enkolpia*, *eikonidia*, and even sacred vessels, while sardonyx, of which the Romans were so fond, was rare. From the point of view of technique and style, the carving of the *enkolpia* of the Middle and Late Byzantine periods shows great skill and a knowledge of the artistic trends of the times. The Byzantine craftsmen in yet another case kept alive a form of art which flourished in antiquity and which at that time had been lost in the West⁴¹.

The *enkolpia* which are kept at the Monastery of Vatopaidi show a variety of materials and styles and this contributes to a correct approach to the religious and personal objects possessed by the ruling class, chiefly, of Byzantium, as well as to the nature of the art which it employed to meet its religious needs. Moreover, their large number demonstrates the importance which the Monastery had for Byzantine society, particularly in the 14th and 15th centuries.

A parallelogram, double-sided *eikonidion* of green jasper⁴², with an archangel on its front and on the reverse two successive medallions with busts of hierarchs (Figs 399, 400), has been turned into an *enkolpion* by a jewelled gold frame, which surrounds it and thus increases its size. The archangel, who is probably Michael, with his head inclined, is wearing military attire and has his large wings furled. Iconographic features place the work in the Palaeologue period (14th century)⁴³.

The decoration of the reverse side of the *eikonidion* shows originality, in that it has two medallions with busts of saints one above the other. This arrangement, customary in monumental painting, is encountered on ivory triptychs⁴⁴ and brass plaques⁴⁵ of the 11th century. There are traces of inscriptions around the heads of the saints⁴⁶. Unfortunately, they do not have individual characteristic features which would aid their identification. The jewelled frame has features which point to a dating to the 16th century⁴⁷.

Also of jasper is the next *enkolpion* (Figs 401, 402), which has the *Pantokrator* in bust form, in



Figs 401 and 402. Enkolpion (4.4 x 3.7 cm.), with the figure of Christ Pantokrator in bust form and mounting with a perforated button-shaped relief. 13th century. Jasper and gold.



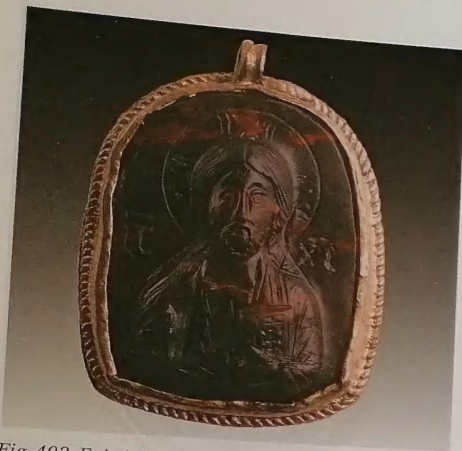


Fig. 403. Enkolpion (4 x 3.3 cm.) with the relief figure of Christ Pantocrator in bust form. 11th century. Jasper and gilded silver.

particularly high relief, especially in the case of the head, as its decoration. The rendering of the nimbus with its inscribed cross and of the abbreviations "IC - XC" by simple engraving stresses the two levels of the relief. The features of the face have been portrayed with plasticity and marked expressiveness. The same plasticity is also observable in the treatment of the folds of the garments. These features lead us to date the work to the 13th century. A comparison with the steatite Pantocrator at the University of Philadelphia reveals a striking iconographic and stylistic similarity⁴⁸.

The gold frame of the *enkolpion* should be dated to the same period. This takes on the front the simple form of a raised double funicular band, but on the reverse the entire surface is covered by a knot-shaped pierced protuberance consisting of intertwined bifurcated bands. The similarity of this raised decoration with other examples on icon revetments of the Virgin from Liège⁴⁹, the Tretyakov Gallery, and Freising in Bavaria, works of the 13th century⁵⁰, is plain to see.

On an oval *enkolpion* of jasper (Fig. 403), which has a silver frame with corners at the bot-

tom and an arch-shaped finial at the top, Jesus is portrayed in bust form, in high relief, in the type of the Pantocrator. The rendering of the trunk and of the hands is more compressed, but in spite of the hardness of the material, the drapery is soft. There is a striking similarity, stylistically and iconographically, with a Pantocrator on an *enkolpion* in the Hermitage of St Petersburg, a work of the late 10th or early 11th century⁵¹, and with a Pantocrator on jasper at the University of Philadelphia⁵², a work of the 11th century. The type of the Pantocrator on the *enkolpion* of the Vatopaidi Monastery is to be found on similar works of the 12th century, such as the rock crystal *enkolpion* in the Benaki Museum⁵³. We believe, nevertheless, that the Vatopaidi work must be dated to the 11th century, as being closer to the works of that time. The workshop where it was made should, in our opinion, be sought in Constantinople⁵⁴.

A steatite *eikonidion*, more or less square in shape and treated with oil⁵⁵, bears a depiction of Our Lady Eleousa with the Infant Jesus, shown with a particularly large body, in her arms (Figs 404, 405). An inscription in capitals is engraved on the background behind the heads of the figures. The iconographic type of the Blessed Virgin is that of the Hodegetria, a very commonly-used type with many variations⁵⁶. The particularly high relief and the sense of a third dimension which is created by it, especially in the rendering of the heads, is close in stylistic terms to the steatite *eikonidion*, also treated with oil, of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple in the Benaki Museum, which has been dated to the 14th century⁵⁷. Similarities between the two *eikonidia* can also be seen in the fact that both have an unusually high outer frame and that in both cases the highest point of the relief is the heads, which are almost three-dimensional⁵⁸. A similar treatment of the drapery, particularly stressed in both works, with deep folds and soft curved lines, can also be found on works in metal of the same period⁵⁹.

A silver plate with a zig-zag finial covers the back and forms the frame of the *eikonidion*⁶⁰. This plate is decorated with a depiction in high relief



Figs 404 and 405. Double-sided eikonidion-enkolpion with zig-zag mounting (6.5 x 6 cm.). On the front. Our Lady Eleousa, in bust form and high relief. On the back, Sts Demetrius and George at full length, in military attire, in cast relief. 14th century. Steatite treated with oil (front) and silver (mounting and back).

of St Demetrius (on the left) and St George (on the right), at full length, who stand, full-face, under arched apertures. Both hold a javelin in their right hand, while with the left they hold a shield against their leg⁶¹.

The treatment of the subject is marked by extreme schematisation, and the high-relief band which frames it has an illegible inscription in relief⁶². A silver reliquary, found in archaeological digs near some graves in the Balkans⁶³, dating from the 14th century, is decorated with a subject in the same style and iconography. This reliquary, which has on its edge wire twisted into a cyclindrical shape to hold a pair of pierced pearls, as the Vatopaidi *eikonidion* has, is a decisive factor in dating the revetment to the period of the 13th-14th centuries. Moreover, the toothed finial framing the icon on the front is also known to us from works of the 13th century⁶⁴.

The small jasper *enkolpion* with the Praying Theotokos towards its left (Fig. 406) has a jewelled frame of the 16th century⁶⁵. The back of this is covered by a silver gilt plaque which is fastened to the *eikonidion* with eight small nails and has

incised and enamelled decoration. This consists of a cross on a stepped base, with the inscription "IC-XC - NI-KA" between the arms and surrounded by a band without inscription.

The iconographic type of the Virgin on the *enkolpion*, three-quarter turned or in profile, in bust form or at full length, repeats the type of the Theotokos of the Deisis and is encountered on medallions as well as *enkolpia* of the 11th-12th centuries. In stylistic terms, the hardness and the schematisation of the outline of the body does not preclude a certain power of expression. The way in which the carving has been done, though summary, renders the subject expressively. The simplified forms of the almond-shaped eyes, the trapezoidal nose, and the broad hands are regarded as characteristics of a number of cameos produced in the 12th and 13th centuries, such as two from St Petersburg and Rostov with the same subject, and a third in the Dumbarton Oaks collection⁶⁶.

An *enkolpion* of sardonyx with relief in two layers (Fig. 407), chestnut and cloudy blue in colour, has a depiction of St George at full

pantocrator have been engraved. The iconography shows no innovations, but stylistically this work, with its high relief, particularly of the head, which is emphasised by the incised nimbus, shows a marked similarity to the relief heads of angels which form the decoration around the Chalice of Thomas Prelumbus (see Fig. 426 below), and to an *enkolpion* showing the Pantocrator from the Monastery of St John the Divine on Patmos⁷³, in which Italian origins have been recognised.

On the reverse the subject has been rendered by a technique of engraving which imitates *champlevé*, known as *en basse taille*. This is a bust of St Demetrius, full face, in military garb, standing out against the ring-punched background together with the inscription which frames him⁷⁴. The band of the frame, with intertwined undulating scrolls, also stands out from the ring-punched ground. While the iconographic details of the figure have been rendered by engraving, an effort has been made by light rubbing to produce *chiaroscuro*, which shows very clearly the influences of painting. The portrayal of the features, with the downcast glance of the large eyes, is related to Byzantine art, while, on the other hand,



Fig. 408. Enkolpion with the Archangel Michael at full length and gold framing (4.7 x 4 cm.). 12th century. Jasper (enkolpion), gold (frame).

Fig. 409 and 410. Double-sided enkolpion (diameter: 5.1 cm.). Front: Christ, in the type of the Pantocrator, enthroned, in high relief. Back: St Demetrius, bust, in low relief. Second half of the 14th century. Gilded silver.



Fig. 406. Enkolpion with jewelled frame (3.2 x 1 cm.). The Blessed Virgin in bust form in an attitude of supplication. 12th-13th century. Jasper (enkolpion), gilded silver (frame).



Fig. 407. Enkolpion with St George at full length as a foot soldier, in high relief (4.2 x 3 cm.). 11th-12th century. Sardonyx (enkolpion), gold with pearls (frame).

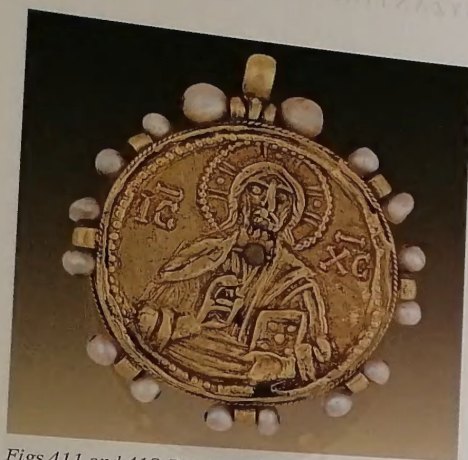
length, as we are informed by an engraved inscription which frames it⁶⁷. A frame in high relief, semicircular in section, stresses the oval shape of the *enkolpion*; it is decorated with a pair of pearl⁶⁸. We can date this work, for reasons of epigraphy, iconography and style to the 11th-12th century⁶⁹.

The depiction of the Archangel Michael on the oval jasper *enkolpion* (Fig. 408) differs from that on the two-sided *eikonidion* (Fig. 399). Here the archangel is shown full-face and at full length, on a base which can just be made out. He holds in his right hand an unsheathed sword in front of his shoulder, with its scabbard in his left. His large wings are open. At the level of his head the abbreviations "OX - M", that is, the Archangel Michael, are engraved.

The way in which the subject is rendered is linked in terms of iconography with the mosaic in St Sophia in Constantinople⁷⁰ and can also be seen in a group of nine similar works which be-

long to the Palaeologue period⁷¹. Iconographically closer is an *enkolpion* of the 10th-11th century in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris⁷², in spite of certain small simplifications, such as the omission of the cingulum. Stylistically, however, the greater plasticity observable in the treatment of the drapery and the rendering of the wings and robust body of the archangel leads to a dating to the 12th century.

Of particular interest is a circular double-sided gold *enkolpion* (Fig. 409) which combines two techniques in its decoration: on the front the technique of high relief, on two levels, and on the back that of engraving. Thus the subject of Christ enthroned giving His blessing as He holds a gospel book from the front is rendered in high relief in the centre of the medallion and framed by a band of low relief with bifurcated high-relief outlines, decorated with an undulating tendril. The nimbus with its inscribed cross and the abbreviation "IC - XC" which surrounds the head of the



Figs 411 and 412. Double-sided enkolpion with cast relief decoration (diameter: 3.6 cm.). Front: Christ Pantocrator in bust form. Back: St Demetrius, at full length, frontal. 14th century. Gold.

the plant decoration of the band of the frame has links with Italian art⁷⁵. The similarity of the technique and style of this *enkolpion* with those of the sacred vessels donated by the Despot of Ioannina Thomas Prelumbus (1367-1389) to the Monastery of Vatopaidi (Figs 426, 429, 430) is striking and it probably formed part of the same donation. There are also marked likenesses in the style of decoration with a portable altar of the 15th century⁷⁶ in Italy. However, the linking of this *enkolpion* with the gift of Thomas Prelumbus to Vatopaidi puts it in the second half of the 14th century⁷⁷.

The double-sided *enkolpion* (Figs 411, 412) with a bust of Christ in the type of the Pantocrator on the front is in the form of a medallion. On the reverse side it has St Demetrius, at full length, full-face, in martial attire, with a leaf-shaped shield held with his left hand and a javelin resting on the ground in his right. A high-relief inscription frames the figure of the Saint, occupying the free space around it⁷⁸, and contributes to the identification of the subject.

Similar cast works of the 6th century came from the imperial mints and were produced on

dates which were important for the imperial family⁷⁹. These medallions at a later period were made up of two plates attached to one another which formed the two sides⁸⁰. In the case of the Vatopaidi *enkolpion* a nail has been added in its centre, probably at a later period. There is a border of raised dots on both sides of the *enkolpion* as on coins. The jewelled mounting must also belong to a later period⁸¹.

In iconographic terms, the themes of the decoration of the *enkolpion* show no innovations. Stylistically, however, their rendering is very close to the two warrior saints of *eikonidion* Fig. 405 and on Palaeologue coins⁸², particularly as regards the depiction of the Pantocrator. A dating of this work to the 14th century is, in our opinion, very probable.

Amongst the most interesting of the treasures preserved in the sacristy of the Monastery of Vatopaidi, and also one of the most valuable, because of its rarity, is the small silver *kivotidion* (casket) of St Demetrius, which must have been used as an *enkolpion*⁸³, and has a direct link with the cult of the Saint in Thessaloniki in Middle Byzantine times (Fig. 413). This casket is one of

the objects which constitute a continuation of the Early Christian 'eulogial' in the 11th and 12th century and contained a small quantity of myrrh and blood.

The construction of the casket, like that of other products of goldsmithing of a similar use⁸⁴, has connections with Thessaloniki workshops, the cult at the shrine there of St Demetrius and the exudation of myrrh from the saint's body⁸⁵, in conjunction with the changes which this appearance of myrrh brought about in the shrine⁸⁶.

This casket⁸⁷ is in the shape of a rectangular parallelepiped with a cross-shaped handle on one of the narrow sides, from which it could be suspended. Its four vertical sides, the cover and the outer face of its base are decorated with embossed scenes on silver gilt plaques. The outer cover of the casket, of a thickness of 1 cm., is sliding, with chamfered edges. When it is drawn back, a second cover is revealed, in which there are two openings, closed by two small leaves, each of which is decorated with embossed depic-

BYZANTINE SMALL ART WORKS

tions of saints. Behind the leaves of the upper opening there is an icon of St Demetrius in bust form, while the leaves of the lower opening covered a dark-coloured mass, believed to be blood and myrrh from the tomb of the Saint.

The casket is a miniature of the sarcophagus which stood inside the famous 'ciborium' of the Church of St Demetrius in Thessaloniki⁸⁸, and it is believed that the scenes with which it is decorated are closely related to the decoration, now lost, of that church⁸⁹, the character of which was *par excellence* votive. Thus these compositions, which we shall examine in greater detail below, may be regarded as the earliest copies which we have of the large works which adorned the Church of the Myrrhobletes* in Thessaloniki, which are now gone for ever.

More specifically, this decoration consists of the following subjects:

On the outer sliding cover (Fig. 414), St Demetrius is shown, at full length on a cushion, full-face, in an attitude of prayer, in elaborate patri-

Fig. 413. Casket-enkolpion containing blood and earth soaked with the blood of St Demetrius (11.7 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm.). The relief decoration with scenes from the life of the Saint and his figure is linked with the 'larnax' and the 'corpse' which were within the ciborium of his church in Thessaloniki. Second half of the 12th century. Gilded silver.





Figs 414 and 415. The upper side and the interior of the casket of Fig. 413.

cian's attire, with an engraved inscription giving his name around his head⁹⁰. The relief, which is high and in the rendering of the hands almost three-dimensional, is marked by its plasticity and the care which has been taken in the depiction of the face in particular, which most probably had a specific model from the *larnax* of the Saint⁹¹.

The inner cover and the shutters (leaves)⁹² of the two openings of the casket are today⁹³ decorated with depictions, at full length, full face, of Sts Cosmas and Lupus (above) and Sts Nestor

and Damian (below)⁹⁴. Evidence for the presence of Sts Cosmas and Damian on *kivotidia* of St Demetrius is provided by an epigram of Manuel Philes and by the casket in Halberstadt⁹⁵.

The figure of St Demetrius, as it appears on the upper shutter of the casket is similar to that on the cover, but here the Saint is shown dead with his eyes closed and his hands crossed on his chest. A similar depiction is to be found on other caskets used for the same purpose⁹⁶. This links this depiction of St Demetrius with the cult sar-



Figs 416 and 417 (below). The long sides of the casket of Fig. 413.

phagus in the ciborium of his church in Thessaloniki⁹⁷, as we have pointed out above.

The sides of the casket are decorated with scenes from the life of the Saint, two on each of the long and one on each of the short sides. They are arranged in chronological sequence. The

scenes of 'the Saint in prison' and 'the Saint killing the scorpion' are on the same long side (Fig. 416) and are separated by a vertical line of raised points. An architectural framework, probably intended to represent the prison, which is repeated in most of the scenes on the casket, takes





Figs 418 and 419. The short sides of the casket of Fig. 413.

the form of a building with a tiled roof and a dome, built in ashlar, with an pointed single-frame window and two columns from a colonnade in front of it⁹⁸.

In the second scene, the Saint is sitting in the same building with his head bent, looking at the enormous scorpion which is raising its pincers in front of him, and with his right hand raised in blessing. This scene seems to be following the narrative of Metaphrastes, but omits the angel who, according to this⁹⁹, was present. On the lower short side is the scene of the visit of Nestor (Fig. 419). The inscription which fills the space between the two figures and in front of the building has clearly been garbled by the engraver¹⁰⁰. The rendering of the scene follows the narrative of the *Synaxaria* (Migne, PG 1857, 116, 1177 vii, 1193 xiii), as well as other versions of the life of the Saint in wall-paintings¹⁰¹.

This is followed by the scenes of the killing of Lyaeus by Nestor and of the martyrdom of the Saint on the other long side. The two scenes lack any separation, and some items of the one run into the other. In the first, Nestor has hurled his spear, and his adversary is lying on the ground. This scene¹⁰² is marked by realism, which is somewhat diminished by the concentration of the details within the narrow confines of the space

available. The scene which follows, that of the martyrdom of the Saint, is presented with striking economy. St Demetrius, standing¹⁰³, receives the spear thrusts of the soldiers, while his hands are held out in supplication towards the hand of God, which blesses him. The economy of the iconography must be attributed not only to the shortage of available space, but also to the prevailing trends in the period when the work was produced - the 12th century¹⁰⁴.

Finally, from the iconographic cycle of the many miracles of the Saint which we know adorned the Church of St Demetrius in Thessaloniki¹⁰⁵, two are shown here: the 'Healing of Marcian' on one of the short sides (Fig. 418), and the 'Driving away of the Slavs besieging Thessaloniki' (Fig. 391).

In the first miracle, the Prefect of Illyricum, who was afflicted with paralysis, according to the 'Book of Miracles' (Migne, PG 1857, 116, 1216 xix), is shown lying on a pallet, while the Saint stands by him and blesses him. Marcian has not realised that he is there, probably to represent the "appearance in a dream" of the Saint to him. The composition is in summary form and is based on the 'Book of Miracles', which is also the source of the inscription which accompanies the scene (Migne, PG 1857, 116, 1217).

In the scene of the 'Driving away of the Slavs besieging Thessaloniki', the greater part of the space is taken up by the depiction of the ashlar walls and gate. The Saint is shown above the gate larger than life-size, in military attire and with a enormous javelin as he is attacking a group of mounted soldiers. This scene is from the second siege of Thessaloniki by the Slavs and Arabs in 586, which, according to the 'Book of Miracles', was lifted by the intervention of the Saint (Migne, PG 1857, 116, 1288 cxii, *et seq.*). The models for the treatment of the subject must have been similar compositions which adorned the church in Thessaloniki¹⁰⁶.

On the basis of iconographic and stylistic details¹⁰⁷, this casket has been dated to the mid 12th century; it is believed to have been made in Thessaloniki¹⁰⁸.

Sacred Vessels

In Byzantium, it was established by the 9th century that the sacred vessels, that is, the vessels used in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and permanently placed on the altar, should be made from precious materials and should be sumptuously decorated. Unfortunately, it is for that reason that so few of them have survived - chiefly in cathedrals of the West, as booty of the Crusaders. These works demonstrate the great ability shown by the craftsmen of Byzantium in conceiving designs and composing works of decoration, often blending techniques, while at the same time following the trends in major art and absorbing the influences of the times. Sacred vessels, crosses, bindings of sacred books, mountings for crosses, and revetments of icons are examples of Byzantine religious silver and goldsmithing work, now scattered among Western cathedrals and Orthodox monasteries, which proves to be in no way inferior to the other expressions of Byzantine art.

The Monastery of Vatopaidi possesses some of the most important treasures in this category. These are works acquired by donations of the imperial family to the Monastery which can be dated with certainty, thus providing reliable criteria

for the study and classification of similar material.

One of the most notable treasures in this category is the chalice known as the 'jasper' (Figs 26, 420), which is regarded as one of the finest works of Byzantine goldsmithing of the Palaeologue period. It belonged to the Despot of Mystras Manuel Cantacuzenus Palaeologus (1349-1380) and was donated to the Vatopaidi Monastery¹¹⁰. The connection with Manuel is based upon four monograms with which the octagonal base is decorated, as they alternate with busts of hierarchs, all framed by circular medallions¹¹¹. The metal rim of the lip has inscribed on it the "the saying of the Lord" - the eucharistic prayer from the Liturgy of St Basil¹¹². This inscription confirms that its purpose was to serve as a chalice, even though both the shape of the calyx¹¹³, and the traditions to do with cures of poisonings¹¹⁴ presuppose another, perhaps earlier, secular use. Perhaps the calyx had such a use initially, before it was mounted with silver gilt and converted into a eucharistic chalice¹¹⁵.

The calyx of the chalice, in the shape of a kylix with a wide lip¹¹⁶, is made of jasper. Its octagonal base, the handles, the foot - the stem, that is, which supports the calyx and fastens it to the base - and the rim around the lip are of silver gilt and are decorated with the *champlevé* technique of relief, which for the rendering of pictorial themes is combined with high relief.

The jasper from which the calyx of the chalice has been carved was solid and large, which lent it particular value and rarity, while the way in which it has been smoothed points to a Constantinople workshop¹¹⁷. The mounting is also of particular interest, since it bears evidence to "the powerful penetration into Late Byzantine art of Western influences"¹¹⁸.

On the base, with its eight triangular compartments, the busts of hierarchs¹¹⁹ in iconographic terms follow Byzantine models and are connected with the Divine Liturgy. The medallions which surround them are framed by spiralling scrolls which end in lush leaves or blossoms and are rendered in low relief, while the matted background creates a differentiation of colour¹²⁰, which helps



Fig. 420. The 'Jasper', according to tradition the gift of the Despot of Thessaloniki Andronicus Palaeologus.

to bring out the subjects.

The polygonal knot which divides the stem into two parts has three bands of compartments, of which the six of the middle band are decorated with medallions which contain, alternately, mythical beasts and cruciform interlacing, while

spiralling foliage fills in the background. The cruciform interlacing is also to be found on knot-shaped bosses of 14th-century sculptures, while the mythical beasts, in the shape of a leonine dragon, sometimes winged¹²¹, are most probably derived from a heraldic emblem. Here the dragons

Fig. 421. Detail of Fig. 420. The inscription on the rim.



Figs 422 and 423. Details of Fig. 420. The monograms with the name of the owner: "Manuel Palaeologus".

are used as decoration, without the symbolic implications which they have in the case of other objects produced by secular goldsmithing in the late 14th century¹²², and in architectural sculpture of the 13th century.

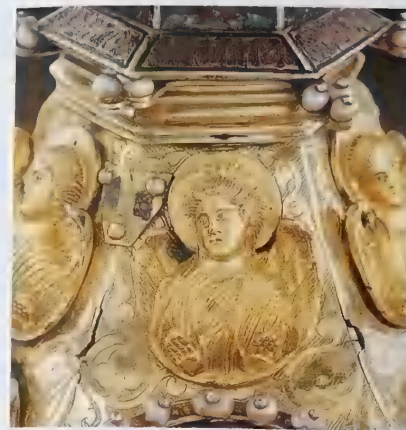
Handles in the shape of dragons, considered to be a Gothic feature¹²³, attach the lip to the knot of the stem. The dragons, which are winged, but have their wings furled, have long tails of great elegance and suppleness which end in a second head. The way in which they are rendered stresses their decorative rather than their monstrous character¹²⁴.

Figs 424 and 425. Details of Fig. 420.



Western influences are also to be seen in the precious *chalice* with cover (Fig. 426), decorated with semi-precious stones and pearls, the gift of the Despot of Ioannina *Thomas Prelumbus* (1367-1384)¹²⁵, according to an inscription in enamel on the base. The chalice was accompanied by a paten (Fig. 429), and an asteriskos* (Fig. 430), a spoon¹²⁶, and, most probably, an *enkolpion* (Fig. 409). The donor is probably associated with other treasures of the Monastery (Figs 392, 393), which, according to tradition, were given to the Monastery "by relatives of Cantacuzenus from Ioannina"¹²⁷.





Figs 427 and 428. Details of Fig. 426.



The *chalice*¹²⁸, richly decorated with translucent enamels ('translucide')¹²⁹ on an engraved background which imitates *champlevé* and is surrounded by nailed pearls, is an example of a synthesis of Western and Byzantine decorative features and techniques.

Its calyx, bell-shaped and slightly elongated, is of a shape familiar from the 10th-11th centuries¹³⁰. It rests in a socket of similar shape and is supported on a hexagonal foot with a spherical knot; the base is divided into six triangular compartments with semi-circular inclined lower edges. An unusual feature is the fact that it has a

circular convex cover, on top of which rests a statuette of Christ enthroned, giving His blessing with both hands. This iconographic type of Christ is also to be found in works of small-scale art and chrysobulls* in which a sacred person blesses saints or benefactors¹³¹.

The decoration of the base is a combination of high relief, in which six busts of angels have been rendered, and the engraving of the carpet of foliage which surrounds them. This combination is known from works of the 15th century, perhaps from a Western workshop¹³². The rest of the decoration of the chalice is pictorial and is rendered in translucent enamel, a technique encountered in Venetian works of the 14th century¹³³, but in a Byzantine style¹³⁴. The iconography of the decoration, which consists of Christ, the Theotokos, angels, apostles, and saints, usually in bust form, whose iconographic relation with the paintings of a doctrinal nature in the sanctuary of churches is manifest¹³⁵, seems to relate to the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist, and this is confirmed by the engraved inscription, of eucharistic content, on the lip of the chalice. A simi-

Fig. 426. Chalice, the gift of the Despot of Ioannina Thomas Comnenus Prelumbus (height 39.5 cm., diameter of base 19.9 cm., diameter of rim 14.2 cm.). The chalice has a cover with a statuette of Christ enthroned. The calyx, the foot and the base are decorated with angels, apostles and saints in translucent enamel. The dedicatory inscription appears on the 'knot' of the chalice. Second half of the 14th century. Gilded silver, enamel, pearls and semi-precious stones.



Fig. 429. Paten (height 2.7-3.5 cm., diameter of rim 26.5 cm.), the gift of the Despot of Ioannina Thomas Comnenus Prelumbus, together with the chalice (Fig. 426) and the asteriskos (Fig. 430). It has a dedicatory inscription on the back of the bottom. Second half of the 14th century. Gilded silver, semi-precious stones, pearls and enamel.



Fig. 430. Asteriskos (height 12 cm. or 15 cm., with the dove), most probably also the gift of the Despot of Ioannina Thomas Comnenus Prelumbus. A three-dimensional dove adorns the point where the two strips of metal meet. Second half of the 14th century. Gilded silver.

lar iconographic pattern is encountered on chalices as early as the 10th century¹³⁶. The inscriptions¹³⁷ which accompany the iconography, both in enamel and engraved, are in Greek and use the forms of abbreviation established in the 14th century.

The figure of Christ enthroned as a three-dimensional statuette on the lid and the busts of angels on the base of the chalice have similarities with works of a Venice workshop of the 13th century¹³⁸. Thus, in a first approach to the chalice and the other vessels of the gift of Thomas Prelumbus, they may be attributed to Greek craftsmen who were working in Venice or who had been influenced by workshops of that city in the third quarter of the 14th century¹³⁹.

The paten (Fig. 429), which, according to the inscription on the outside of the bottom¹⁴⁰, formed part of the gift of the Despot of Ioannina Thomas Prelumbus (see Fig. 426), is in the shape of a circular plate, divided inside and out into three concentric zones. The smaller, in the middle, is circular (diameter: 8.5 cm.) and contains an inlaid medallion with the scene of the Lamentation at the Tomb depicted in translucent enamel and by engraving¹⁴¹. The composition uses iconographic types established in the Byzantine art of the 14th century¹⁴² and is accompanied by the inscription "Η ΑΠΟΚΑΘΛΟCΙC (The Deposition)", instead of the more usual 'Lamentation at the Tomb'¹⁴³. The two outer zones are in the shape of a medallion which encloses a rosette formed by

semi-circular indentations, a pattern known from a paten of the 11th century¹⁴⁴. The semi-circular compartments of the inner zone are decorated with six-winged cherubim by an engraving technique, while those of the outer zone are filled with engraved compartments with busts of angels in translucent enamel. The angels are shown doing reverence in pairs in a posture known from compositions dealing with the Divine Liturgy, but also from depictions of Our Lady Platytera* in Byzantine churches¹⁴⁵.

The spaces between the semi-circles are filled by an inscription of eucharistic content in alternately black and red enamel¹⁴⁶, which is linked with the iconography of the decoration. Thus, in iconographic terms, the decoration of the paten is certainly within the spirit of the Orthodox Church and of its art in the 14th century, even if its technical execution, the translucent enamel, that is, has followed Western modes.

We believe that included in the same gift should be the 'asteriskos'¹⁴⁷ (Fig. 430) which has an engraved inscription the lettering and framing of which show striking similarities with the inscriptions of the two other vessels which formed part of the gift. Its sole decoration, at the point where the rectangular plates placed crosswise meet, is a three dimensional dove and among the words of the inscription there are eight-petalled rosettes in a little circle in *basse taille* relief¹⁴⁸. The inscription¹⁴⁹ on each plate is divided by the rosettes and the dove into eight parts and its text (Matthew 2: 9-10) is a reference to the symbolism of the asteriskos¹⁵⁰.

Of the processional crosses preserved in the Monastery of Vatopaidi, it is the so-called *cross of Constantine the Great* which is bound up with one of the Monastery's oldest traditions, even though it cannot go back to the time of Constantine (Fig. 431). This cross, in its present position above the altar, is especially imposing. It is clad completely with silver plating which bears plant decoration in relief, to which enamel medallions have been added. Although opinions to the contrary have been expressed¹⁵¹, the silver revetment must belong to a single period. The additions of a later date are, first, the inscription on the base,

which consists of 20 verses dealing with the miraculous preservation of the cross and the icon of Our Lady Vematarissa during the looting of the Monastery by barbarians¹⁵²; and, second, the five gilt medallions framed with rays¹⁵³.

The type of the cross, a variation of the cross of the Resurrection with an extra horizontal arm on the lower part, placed obliquely, is particularly common in Russia, as Uspenskij notes¹⁵⁴. At the ends of the arms there are medallions containing busts of sacred persons, whose background and nimbus and the decoration on their garments are completed with dark blue and golden yellow enamel, which, unfortunately, has largely been lost. The medallions, like the rest of the silver revetment, have been nailed to the wooden core. At the point where the vertical and the large horizontal arms are joined, there is a parallelogram compartment with a depiction of the Descent into Hell, which is flanked by two smaller compartments of the same shape, with full-length figures of saints. These compartments are covered today by the later addition of the medallion with rays. The following subjects are shown on the medallions: on the small horizontal arm (Fig. 432): the Preparation of the Throne in the centre, flanked by two archangels, shown to the waist and doing reverence; on the extremities of the middle horizontal arm: the Theotokos and St John the Baptist, today covered by the later additions; on the oblique arm: medallions of the First of the Apostles Peter and Paul. At the bottom of the vertical arm, a medallion encloses a depiction of Sts Constantine and Helen, who are holding a similar cross, also with an extra, oblique, arm. This medallion is, unfortunately, very worn, and the subject, to which in all probability the cross owes its traditional name, is hard to distinguish. This type of decoration is found on crosses of the 12th century intended for a similar use, the closest example being a cross of the 13th century said to have belonged to Manuel I Comnenus of Trebizond¹⁵⁵. The plant decoration which covers the body of the cross and the medallions shows a striking stylistic likeness to the revetment of the icon of the Apostles Peter and Paul (Fig. 29), which can be dated, thanks to a surviving inscrip-



tion, to the 15th century and is said to have belonged to the Despot Andronicus Palaeologus (1408-1423). We may suppose it probable that this cross was yet another gift of the Despot, before he himself became a monk.

Revetments of Icons

Gold, silver or silver gilt revetments of icons, sacred books and other objects, chiefly of wood, such as the cross of Constantine which we have discussed, have a long tradition, going back to the



Figs 431 and 432. The so-called Cross of Constantine the Great, in the type of a resurrection cross with an oblique arm at the feet, relief cladding and figurative medallions (height 106 cm., length of large arm 57 cm., diameter of medallions 9 cm.). With later additions in the form of star-shaped appliqué ornamentations. 15th century (cladding), 19th century (star-shaped ornamentations). Silver, enamel and wood.

early centuries of Christianity. The revetments on icons¹⁵⁶ are a kind of votive offering, familiar from the Middle Byzantine period, which demonstrates the devotion of the faithful, contributing at the same time to the "achievement of the moral effulgence of the holy icon"¹⁵⁷. It is a supplication of the donor which craves his entry into Paradise¹⁵⁸. In describing the gold revetment of an icon, the Byzantine poet Manuel Philes¹⁵⁹ likens the plant decoration of the background of the icon to the garden of Paradise: "I look upon the golden Eden of the icon ...".

It is believed that the revetments of icons, made of fine sheets of precious metal, usually silver gilt, and decorated chiefly in high relief, imitate, in a cheaper manner, icons from metal icon stands, of gold or silver, very probably cast in relief, which adorned the imperial churches of Constantinople. These revetments in the Middle

Byzantine period covered the entire surface of the icon¹⁶⁰, while in the Palaeologue era they were limited to the background of the icon and its frame. The frame was usually wide enough to permit the portrayal of busts of saints, scenes from the Gospel or scenes from the lives of saints, which followed the iconographic pattern familiar from painted icons without a revetment in which the main subject and the secondary scenes on the frame are juxtaposed, thus increasing the importance of the icon in the eyes of the faithful. Thus the decoration of the frame of the icon with the Deesis or the Preparation of the Throne on the upper part and saints, in bust form and in an attitude of supplication, on the other sides, was regarded as an expression of prayer on the part of the donor for the salvation of his soul. Moreover, on the frames with their depictions of narrative cycles from the Gospels or hagiographical cycles, one can see an effort being made to provide a reminder of events which are linked with the life of the central figure of the icon. The iconographic pattern of this type has its roots in late antiquity¹⁶¹.

Most of the surviving revetments belong to the period of the Palaeologues (14th-15th centuries)¹⁶². Among them, pride of place goes to the revetments of the icons of the Vatopaidi Monastery. In this period, two techniques were predominant in their production: that of high relief (*au repoussé*) and that of metal threads used to form framing¹⁶³. These techniques co-exist chronologically in the late 14th or early 15th centuries, and, moreover, frequently in the same work - a fact which confirms the view¹⁶⁴ that the technical and stylistic features of the revetments cannot lead to reliable datings¹⁶⁵. However, the claddings of the icons in Figs 3, 313, 433, 438, 439 of the Vatopaidi Monastery have been dated with relative certainty, on the basis of reliable features such as inscriptions (Figs 313, 433) or the style of the painting of the icon to which they are fitted, by reason of which they have been attributed to a workshop of Constantinople or Thessaloniki. In dating the other revetments of the Monastery of Vatopaidi, comparisons of style between their scenes in relief and depictions in sculpture in

churches whose dates are known and with the artistic trends which these represent are helpful¹⁶⁶. Workshops outside major urban centres such as Constantinople or Thessaloniki have been identified in provincial monasteries¹⁶⁷. It is, then, very likely that on the Holy Mountain, and particularly at Vatopaidi, there should have been silversmithing workshops, operating chiefly in the post-Byzantine period¹⁶⁸.

The reverence accorded to revetments of icons in the Byzantine period is demonstrated by the fact that they are described by men of letters like Manuel Philes, and that they were re-used when the original icons for which they were intended had been lost (Figs 433, 434) and repaired by means of later additions when they had suffered minor damage or wear (Fig. 433). In cases where the wear or damage was serious, the old revetment was not removed, but covered with a new one (Fig. 439)¹⁶⁹.

The revetments of the early 14th century combine a variety of techniques, such as openwork relief, with or without enamel, high and low relief or relief champlévé with enamel, while at the end of the century and in the early 15th century the technique of filigree prevailed. Thus, since the materials at the Vatopaidi Monastery followed this order, it leads to an approximate chronological classification. The first category includes revetments Fig. 3, 29, 433, published by Grabar¹⁷⁰, with the exception of the unpublished Fig. 84. In this category there are features in common in the decoration, such as the alternation of pictorial panels with those of purely decorative character on the frame, the presence of raised button-shaped embellishments with intricate plant interlacing, the stylistic affinity in the rendering of the scrolls which make up the background of the panels of decoration and, in some cases, the background of the icon, and the similarity of subject-matter and style in the decoration of the strap which links the frame and the background of the icon. These features could point in the direction of a shared artistic trend, influenced by contemporary sculpture, which governs the silversmithing of revetments, icons and sacred books in the early 14th century¹⁷¹.



⁴Figs 433 and 434 (previous double page). Icon of Our Lady Hodeghetria (56.5 x 42 cm.) with a relief revetment which comes from an older icon. According to an inscription on the lower frame of the revetment, this was the gift of the Lady Papadopoulina, also on behalf of her sister Arianitissa. 14th century (revelment). 18th century (icon). Wood, silver and enamel.

Icon of Christ Pantocrator (54 x 41 cm.) with a relief revetment to which additions have been made. 18th century (icon), second half of the 14th century (revelment). 17th and 18th century (additions to the revetment). Wood, silver (revelment).

Regarded as one of the most representative examples of this category at the Vatopaidi Monastery is the silver revetment of the early 14th century¹⁷² which today adorns the icon of Our Lady Hodeghetria (Fig. 433) (18th century). Originally, this revetment belonged to an icon with the same subject, according to the surviving inscriptions¹⁷³, which, however, was of lesser height¹⁷⁴ and had busts of two angels doing reverence near the upper corners; of these only the outlines survive on the revetment. According to an inscription in cast enamel on two separate metal plates on the lower frame of the revetment¹⁷⁵, it was the gift of the noblewoman Papadopoulina, also in the name of her sister, Charis Arianitissa¹⁷⁶.

The revetment is divided into three main parts: the background, the frame, and the nimbuses. The cladding of the background has been effected by a single sheet of metal covered with continuous rows of small crosses and palmette-like embellishments¹⁷⁷, rendered in dark blue champlevé enamel, which is worn at many points. The raised openwork nimbuses are decorated with fine tendrils - only at the edges ending in leaves - which spiral and intertwine in octagonal interlacing, in pairs¹⁷⁸. These decorations alternate with circular raised 'buttons'; in their case, however, the spaces between the tendrils are filled with enamel in two colours¹⁷⁹, cobalt blue and turquoise. The strap between the background and the frame is decorated with interlacing bifurcated straps¹⁸⁰ which today have at many points been replaced by plates

of a later date, in many cases without decoration¹⁸¹. The frame is covered by plates divided into panels in which non-figurative ornamentation and scenes from the Dodekaorton alternate¹⁸². The compositions have engraved, ill-spelt inscriptions in capitals, giving the subject and sometimes the abbreviation for the name of the sacred persons¹⁸³. They are rendered with the greatest care, with emphasis on the dynamism of the figures, on the plasticity of the treatment of the garments, and on the framing of the scenes with works of architecture¹⁸⁴.

The arrangement of the scenes does not follow the chronological order of the events. The scenes of the Ascension of the Lord and the Dormition of the Theotokos should have been on the lower frame between the two plates which bear the donor's inscription embossed¹⁸⁵ and were lost during the course of some later repair when the plates of the inscription changed place, rendering the text unintelligible. In the rest of the panels, raised bosses stand out, against a background of scrolls in low relief, from straps which interlace in the manner of basket-weaving, framed by small button-shaped protrusions with intertwining tendrils. The bosses, large and small, are rendered by openwork technique, supplemented by enamel, now lost.

Typical of this work is the raised demarcation of the panels of the frame and of the nimbuses, which imitates embroidery¹⁸⁶. Also worth noting is the similarity of the decoration in technique and style with the binding of a sacred book of 1453¹⁸⁷, with revetment No. 21, and with the revetment of an icon which can be reliably dated to the late 13th century¹⁸⁸.

Belonging to the same category is a second revetment of an icon of the Theotokos of the type of the Hodeghetria (Fig. 184), known as the *Elaiovrytissa*¹⁸⁹. This is an icon of the last quarter of the 14th century with its silver revetment, which covers the background, the nimbuses, the frame and the strap which links this with the background, constituting a single whole, virtually intact¹⁹⁰. Interlacing in low relief, consisting of intertwining tendrils, which form 'woven' rhomboid ornamentations, denser on the background of the

icon, and more widely-spaced on the panels of the frame, is the principal decorative theme. The gaps thus created are filled with half leaves or four-petalled blossoms. The same theme, appropriately modified, covers the bosses in openwork which, inscribed in squares, adorn the middle of each side of the frame¹⁹¹. The strap which links the frame with the background is decorated with schematised palmettes, as is the corresponding strap in the case of the mosaic icon of the Crucifixion (Figs 314, 345)¹⁹². At the corners of the frame there are panels with half-length depictions of the prophet Isaiah (top left), St John the Baptist (top right), and the Apostle Matthew¹⁹³ (bottom right). The panel at the bottom left corner has not survived. The figures are in low relief, the folds of their garments and the features of the face, which are not lacking in plasticity and expressiveness, being rendered by engraving. The decoration on the nimbuses of the Theotokos and of Christ differ from the rest of the revetment. The background of the nimbuses has been filled in with dark blue enamel, while the nimbus of the Blessed Virgin is covered with complexes of bifurcated straps which resemble those found in other similar works¹⁹⁴. The ornamentations with pairs of palmettes between the arms of the cross

Fig. 435. Detail of the mosaic icon of the Crucifixion (Fig. 314) with relief revetment on the frame. 14th century. Wood and glass paste (icon), silver (revelment). Dimensions of icon: 33 x 30 cm.



which is inscribed in the nimbus of Christ are closer to the intertwining palmette-like tendrils of the panels of the frame.

Correlations with other dated revetments of icons lead to a relatively early dating of this work to the late 13th - early 14th century¹⁹⁵, thus confirming our hypothesis that this revetment was not originally intended for the icon of the *Elaiovrytissa*, which dates from the second half of the 14th century.

The silver revetment of the second half of the 14th century (Fig. 434), of the same category, which today covers a later icon of *Christ Pantocrator*¹⁹⁶, is more or less intact, with small additions of a later date. It is worth noting that in the decoration of the revetment, the complex composition of non-figurative ornamentation which frames the figure is more restless and departs from the idea of the carpet of blossom of the icons in Figs 84, 433. Successive rows of intertwining spirals of tendrils alternate with pairs of circular button-like bosses whose decorative motif is similar to that of the enamelled 'buttons' of the nimbus of icon Fig. 433. Later (15th century), two raised circular panels were nailed between them. These have half-length depictions of the ascetics St Peter the Athonite and St Onuphrius¹⁹⁷, rendered by engraving on a background of cast dark blue enamel, a technique which relates to the revetment of the 15th-century icon of the Apostles Peter and Paul (Fig. 29) of the Monastery of Vatopaidi. The frame with its heavily-laden decoration has also had later additions of at least two different periods¹⁹⁸ and has undergone alterations to adjust it to the size of the later icon, which is smaller¹⁹⁹. It is decorated with large parallelogram panels which alternate with other rectangles, attached at a later date. In the former, a rhomboid boss with a 'woven' pattern, familiar from other icon revetments²⁰⁰, is framed by four button-shaped medallions, similar to those on the background of the icon, and a tendril intertwines between them. The square panels contain seven busts of saints, of whom St Mark (left), St John the Evangelist (right), St Nicholas (top), and St John Chrysostom (bottom)²⁰¹ have survived in good condition, but have been cut to fit them to

the size of the frame: only the panel with St John Chrysostom has retained its original dimensions. The other three panels have silver of a different shade and the rendering of the busts has not been completed²⁰². The plasticity which marks the rendering of the face and the garments links the first four busts with similar works of the late 14th and early 15th century²⁰³.

The next *revetment*, dated on the basis of an inscription to the first quarter of the 15th century, shows great homogeneity of techniques, given that its decoration is a combination of low relief and enamel only. This is the *revetment* of the icon of the *First of the Apostles, Peter and Paul* (Fig. 29), which tradition regards as "a family icon of the Palace", while, according to an inscription incorporated into the *revetment* (Fig. 31)²⁰⁴, it was a gift of the scion of the imperial family the Despot Andronicus Palaeologus, son of the Emperor Manuel, who became a monk at Vatopaidi²⁰⁵. It is our belief that the *revetment* is an integral work which has not been repaired by additions²⁰⁶.

"A carpet of fine embossed ornamentation of spiralling tendrils" covers the background of the icon, while a tendril in a similar style, which has taken the form of a 'running spiral' fills the long narrow panels of the frame. This motif is close to the metalwork and manuscript miniatures of the 14th century²⁰⁷. Between them, in nine square panels with raised outlines, whose form is reminiscent of a stitch, sheets of silver of a similar shape have been nailed with busts of saints in medallions, rendered in *champlevé* and enamel of three colours. Apart from the three principal figures - the Theotokos, Christ (Fig. 30), and St John the Baptist - whose panels occupy the upper part of the frame, forming the iconographic pattern of the Deisis, there are depictions of four warrior saints: St Theodore the Tiro and St Theodore the Stratelates, St George, and St Demetrius. The upper corners are occupied by St Nestor and St Lupus, full-length, figures closely bound up with Thessaloniki's Saint - a fact which increases their importance for the iconography, and perhaps also for the origin of the icon. Inscriptions on the red background flank the figures²⁰⁸, while the donor's inscription is in a small square panel on the lower

side. The preference of the donor, Andronicus Palaeologus, Despot of Thessaloniki, for this iconographic design is understandable, though it can also be interpreted by the attribution of the work to a Thessaloniki workshop, to which, consequently, the so-called cross of Constantine (Fig. 431) will also be attributed, the silver *revetment* of which shows a marked similarity of style, technique and subject-matter with the icon of Andronicus, as we have pointed out above.

On the two small mosaic icons of the Vatopaidi Monastery²⁰⁹ the *revetment* covers only the frame, while in terms of technique and style, they have similarities - in spite of the differences in the decorative themes - which lead us to the same workshop²¹⁰. The fact that tradition²¹¹ tells us that both icons were gifts of relatives of the Emperor John Cantacuzenus (1347-1354) from Ioannina strengthens this hypothesis. Moreover, their dating to the late 13th or early 14th century, based on comparisons of style²¹², does not conflict with this supposition. In the case of both icons, the frame is covered with a single sheet for each side; these are divided into ornamental panels by 'twisted rope' divisions²¹³.

The *revetment* on the mosaic icon of the *Crucifixion* (Fig. 314) is a single whole with only a few repairs²¹⁴. The subjects of the decoration consist of 12 scenes chiefly from the *Dodekaorton*²¹⁵, which are separated by long narrow vertical divisions with ornamentation probably inspired by the goldsmithing of the East²¹⁶. The scenes are accompanied by explanatory inscriptions in relief²¹⁷. A strap of schematised palmettes comes between the frame and the background of the icon. This motif, familiar from icon Fig. 84, is encountered chiefly on Byzantine architraves. The scenes from the Gospel are arranged in chronological order, but the *Crucifixion* has been omitted, probably because it is the main subject of the icon which they frame. In iconographic terms, they are very close to the corresponding scenes on the *revetment* of the icon of the *Hodeghetria* (Fig. 433)²¹⁸, but stylistically they show a more marked inclination towards ornamentation, a more effective presence of landscape, and a less painstaking and sketchier rendering of the facial features.

The mosaic icon of *St Anne* (Fig. 313), which, according to a view which has not yet actually been proved, was part of a triptych²¹⁹, is believed to be linked in terms of subject-matter with its donor²²⁰ and to be a form of supplication on his part²²¹ for the salvation of his soul. The *revetment*, which is in good condition, without additions, must have been originally intended for this icon. It consists of an alternation of square panels with figurative and ornamental subjects, and it is only on the vertical sides that two long narrow parallelogram divisions are interposed²²². The figurative decoration consists of busts of two angels who flank the Preparation of the Throne (top of frame), and of the Apostles Thomas, James, and Philip (bottom of frame), and the full-length, full-face, figures of St Joachim the Forefather of Christ and St Joseph the Betrothed²²³. The subjects, which are rendered in high relief, are marked stylistically by a combination of features of the Palaeologue renaissance, somewhat clumsily rendered²²⁴. Thus, the mobility in the stance of the Apostles Thomas and Philip, the grace in the inclination of the heads of the archangels, especially Gabriel, and the treatment of the broad folds of the garments of the full-length figures contrast with the aridity of the rendering of the features of Sts Joseph, Joachim, and James, in whom a sterile repetition of types is observable.

The ornamental motifs, in a combination of high and low relief, show a certain lack of skill in their execution²²⁵, particularly in the obscure outlines of the ornamentation. The strap which links the background with the frame of the icon is adorned with a linked complex of bifurcated straps forming alternating rhombuses and ellipses, skilfully executed here, familiar from other icon *revetments* and bookbinding of the 14th century²²⁶.

It is a sign of special reverence that beneath a more modern *revetment* of an icon those of earlier periods should have been retained. Icons such as Our Lady of Vladimir, the palladium of Russia, have two almost complete *revetments*, one on top of the other. The same is true of the icon of the *Vematarissa* or *Ktetorissa* (Fig. 3)²²⁷, equally important for the Monastery of Vatopaidi. In this

case, there are sections of an older *revetment* below the present one. Of this older *revetment*, probably the first to be fitted to the icon of the *Vematarissa* - whose painting is in so poor a condition that it is just possible to make out the subject - only the upper and lower sides of the frame have survived. The decoration, produced by the *champlevé* enamel technique, has *rotae sericae*, formed by a ring-punched strap, on the upper frame. Contained in the circles are star and cross-shaped ornamentations, a motif familiar from architectural sculpture and from the enamel decoration of sacred vessels of the 11th century²²⁸. Triangular panels containing, alternately, a cross in a medallion and a cypress-like ornamentation fill the spaces between the circles. The enamel - in three colours: red, deep blue, and light green - is combined with the gilt silver with its yellowish-white colour. The same enamel colours are also used in the row of linked rhombuses which adorns the strap below the frame and which must have originally linked the *revetment* of the frame with that of the background of the icon.

On the lower side of the frame, there is, instead of any other decoration, a dedicatory inscription of the Abbot Theosterictus. This is in capitals in two verses, in *champlevé*, while the background is filled with dark red enamel. Its text reads as follows: "ΥΠΕΡ ΑΦΕΣΕΩΣ Α-ΜΑΡΤΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΧΩΡ[Η]ΣΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ Θ[ΕΟΥ] ΥΘΕΟΚΤΗΡ[Η]ΚΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ *ΚΑΙ ΚΑΘΗΤΟΥ*/ΜΕ*ΝΟΥ ΤΗC CEBACMIAC ΜΟΝΗC ΤΟΥ Β[ΑΤΟ]ΠΕΔΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΧΗC ΤΗC Ε[Ν ΘΕ]Ω... Α]ΔΕΛΦΟΤΗΤΟC (For the remission of sins and pardon of the servant of God Theosterictus monk and abbot of the venerable Monastery of Vatopaidi and all the brotherhood in God)"

It would be very easy to date this *revetment* if we knew when Theosterictus was Abbot of the Monastery. Unfortunately, his name, a rare one generally, does not occur among those which have come down to us²²⁹. We should note, however, that the list of Abbots whose names are known to us has gaps in the 12th century. Research in the Serbian sources has revealed the existence of an Abbot of the name of Theosterictus at the Monastery in the late 12th century. This Abbot is



Figs 436 and 437 (previous double page). The 'Ninia of Theodora', two icons which have been converted into a diptych, with Christ Pantocrator (19 x 25 cm.) and Our Lady 'Hope of the hopeless' (17 x 23 cm.). They have revetments in filigree technique. The icon of Our Lady and its revetment were the gift of Anna Palaeologina Cantacuzena Philanthropina, as the inscription states. Late 14th - early 15th century (revetments and icons). Wood and gilded silver.

connected with the tonsuring of St Sabbas at Vatopaidi around 1192 and the visit of his father, Stephen Nemanja, in 1196²³⁰. It is, then, very probable that this Abbot, whom the Serbian sources link with other generous donations to his Monastery, was the owner of the inscribed revetment. It is, however, safer that the dating of the first revetment of the Vematarissa should rest upon a combination of historical, stylistic, thematic, and technical features. The relation between the enamel decorations of the 10th and 11th centuries, such as on the two icons of the Archangel Michael in Venice²³¹ or the mounting of the Chalice of the Patriarchs of the same period, and the enamel decoration of Our Lady Vematarissa lead to a dating to the Middle Byzantine period. Furthermore, the simplicity of the schematised decorative subjects of the champlévé enamel revetment has similarities with the decorative motifs on the borders of manuscripts of the 10th and early 11th centuries, such as Parisinus Gr. 139 in the Bibliothèque Nationale of France.

It is, moreover, likely that the first revetment covered not only the background of the icon, but extended to the sacred persons, covering them with sheets of silver or gold and thus giving the icon a particularly sumptuous appearance, usual in icons which were the objects of pilgrimage²³².

It is, then, very likely that the oldest surviving revetment of the icon of Our Lady Vematarissa, the gift of the Monastery's Abbot Theosterictus, which retains in its decoration features of the 11th century and copies of earlier models, belongs to the late 12th century.

The two vertical sides of the frame are covered

with a revetment of gilt silver plates in the form of straps decorated with reliefs. These have an alternation of parallelogram panels with scenes in relief and raised bosses, framed by interlacing plant ornamentation. The scenes belong principally to the iconographic cycle of the Blessed Virgin²³³, but with pairs of saints or Apostles also introduced. The scenes from the life of the Virgin, apart from the Annunciation, belong in stylistic terms to one group, while the pairs of saints and the Annunciation belong to another²³⁴. The panels with the bosses have an outline which is stressed by raised pearl-like ornamentation which imitates the jewelled decoration of many outlines with pearls (see the chalice of Prelumbus). In the middle of the panel there is a 'button', which is covered by intertwining bifurcated tendrils. The short sides of the panel are covered with tendrils of acanthus which intertwine in two circles fastened with a knot, end in two smaller circles, and are filled with acanthus leaves and half-leaves.

The composition of the ornamental features in panels of the frame of the icon of Our Lady in the type of the Hodeghetria at Oruzpejnaya Palata in Moscow²³⁵, which is regarded as a 'Greek work' of the 14th century, is similar. This too has scenes from the cycle of the Theotokos, the manifestly inferior art of which is regarded as "clearly of the Palaeologue period". A comparison of scenes in the two works, such as the Embrace of Joachim and Anne or the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, demonstrates that iconographically and stylistically the Vatopaidi work is superior and closer to Palaeologue models²³⁶.

The revetment underwent many alterations between the 17th and the 19th century, the additions covering the original enamel revetment and the background of the icon²³⁷.

The category of revetments produced by filigree technique²³⁸, consisting of fine metal straps which form cells (*filigrans en rubans*) on a metal plate, or without this, can be dated²³⁹ with certainty to the second half of the 14th and the early 15th century. To this category belong icons which are preserved outside Greece and, above all, on the Holy Mountain²⁴⁰ and particularly at Vato-

paidi, where five icons with revetments of this category have survived. Of these, two are linked by tradition with Thessaloniki and the Church of Aghia Sophia²⁴¹. These are the icons of the Hospitality of Abraham and of Our Lady Hodeghetria, which must, on the evidence of technique, style, and subject-matter, be the products of the same workshop, the location of which in Thessaloniki appears probable²⁴². The revetment on the icon of the Annunciation, whose ornamental subject-matter is related to that of the other two icons, could also be attributed to a workshop in Thessaloniki. Typical here is the care with which the painted surface to which the revetment is fitted has been delineated so as not to affect details of the painted subject, such as the waves of the angels' hair which appear inside the outline of the nimbus.

However, the revetments of two other icons, those known as the 'Ninia' of Theodora²⁴³, though belonging to the same category of revetments produced by filigree technique, differ perceptibly from the rest of the icon revetments of the same technique. Thus, the wire in the ornamentation of the icon of Christ is twisted, and the revetment of the icon of the Theotokos has plates on the frame, worn today, with the dedicatory inscription of the donor of the revetment. Interspersed in the text of this inscription are busts of saints and a bust of Christ in low relief; only on the background is filigree technique used. Another particularity of these two revetments is that they extend to the hands of the two figures and to the gospel book which Christ is holding, as is the case with other icons of the 14th and 15th centuries²⁴⁴, in which, however, the garments are also covered.

On this important diptych²⁴⁵ (Figs 436, 437) of the icons of Christ Pantocrator and Our Lady with the title 'the Hope of the Hopeless', only parts of the original revetment have survived. According to the inscriptions, the donor of the revetment was Anna Palaeologina, Cantacuzena Philanthropina²⁴⁶.

The icon of Christ preserves parts of a revetment of great importance from an aesthetic and technical point of view. The homogeneous filigree technique²⁴⁷ covers not only the background of

the icon, but also the nimbus and the frame, today damaged at many points. This is a fine network of little circles, filled with tendrils and spirals, made of fine twisted silver wire. Solid metal strips mark out the edges of the frame, of the nimbus with its inscribed cross, and the revetment at the points where the painted depiction of the subject begins²⁴⁸.

The icon of the Blessed Virgin retains its revetment on the background and on the nimbus to a large degree intact. The subject consists of a complex of panels filled with spiralling tendrils which form rhombuses on the background of the icon and circles on the nimbus. This composition differs from that of the revetment on the icon of Christ, which is less dense. The inscriptions which flank the figure of the Blessed Virgin are engraved on parallelogram plaques²⁴⁹. The frame of the icon, as we have already noted, bears an inscription with a prayer of the donor to the Theotokos between panels with busts of sacred personages, an arrangement familiar from other icons of the same period²⁵⁰. Unfortunately, only two of these panels²⁵¹ have survived on the worn plates of the donor's inscription²⁵². On the basis of this inscription, the revetment can be dated to the late 14th - early 15th century.

The revetment of the icon of the Hospitality of Abraham (Fig. 439), a model well-preserved revetment of the late 14th - early 15th century²⁵³, with minor later additions which have been harmoniously blended with the original, covers the frame and the background, which includes the nimbus of the five figures in the composition. The original revetment consisted of a carpet of trefoil ornamentation into which successive rows of circles are introduced by broader, double, straps. The circles, of differing size, contain an alternation of Greek crosses among tendrils and plants with spiralling tendrils. Near the upper frame, in two horizontal rectangular panels, is the inscription "H ATIA - TPIAE (The Holy Trinity)".

On the strap which bounds the background of the icon, two facing rows of heart-shaped tendrils surround a palmette-like ornamentation, a subject familiar from architectural sculpture of the

